642 565 The "middle class" non-military Nayars, the Nayar servant castes of menials, all the lower polluting castes, and the serfs, were excluded from the administrative system of the kingdom. Above these castes, the "good" castes formed two hierarchies, the one concerned with the public ritual of the state, and the other with secular administration. The first hierarchy comprised Nambudiris and temple servants; the second, royalty, chiefs and Nayar retainers. Nambudiris were largely outside the legal system of the kingdom; temple servants, though subject to it, took no part in its administration. Political organization was in the hands of the Nayars, their chiefs, and their royal lineage.

643 701 631 While responsible for maintaining traditional unwritten law and custom (mamool) among the several castes, the kings were concerned chiefly with amassing soldiers for their armies. Though in each kingdom the royal lineage owned the land in many villages as its private estate, its strength was estimated not in territory but in numbers of Nayar soldiers. Each nad and each desam was classified according to the number of Nayar men it could customarily muster for war, records[31]of these were kept by the 702 Nayar clerks of the palaces. The chief duty of each naduvari was to assemble regularly the soldiers of his nad for military exercises, and in time of war to lead them to battle with the king himself at their head. Within the nad military training was organized on a village basis, sometimes by the Nayar desavari, or, in those villages without a Nayar headman, by a Nayar

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Pandya, appears to have grown powerful on the basis of trade with Rome. Like Chola and Pandya, it was a Tamil kingdom; Malayalam, the modern language of Kerala, did not diverge from Tamil until about the tenth century (Sastri, 1955: 400). It is clear from the Tamil literature of the Sangam period that the basic features of Kerala's division of labor, caste system and village organization, must have developed during or before the Chera period (*ibid.*: 110–140). The three South Indian kingdoms temporarily disintegrated in the late third century, probably as a result of a sharp decline in Roman trade.

There is no mention of any matrilineal caste like the Nayars in the Chera kingdom. When and whence they came is uncertain. The most plausible suggestion is that during the Chera period they were a matrilineal hill tribe occupying the Ghats under chiefs who owed a tenuous allegiance to the Chera kings. They may have descended to the Kerala plains as invading barbarians about the fourth century, when the Chera kingdom collapsed (Ayyar, 1938: 43). Little is known of Kerala between the Chera period and the thirteenth century. All or a part of it passed under the rule of a succession of viceroys (Perumals) from various South Indian kingdoms to the east of the Ghats. The date of the last Perumal is quite uncertain. Many writers concur in placing him in the early ninth century, but he may possibly have lived as late as the thirteenth. Nayar chiefs and Nayar soldiers are first mentioned in three copperplate inscriptions, tentatively dated late seventh, mid-eighth, and early ninth centuries. The inscriptions record grants of land and judicial privileges on the coast to settlements of Jewish and Syrian Christian traders (Logan, 1887, I: 265). The grants were made by rulers of Kerala, presumably Perumals, and were witnessed by Nayar chiefs of Venad, Ernad, Walluvanad, and Palghat. All these districts were famous Nayar chiefdoms in the later periods and persisted until the eighteenth century. The plates suggest that Nayar chiefs with private armies had emerged as vassals of the Perumals at least by the ninth century. By the mid-thirteenth century, at the latest, the greater Nayar chiefs had become independent small kings, and the Perumals had disappeared.

Chinese had resumed trade with Kerala sometime in the Perumal period, and in the thirteenth century this trade greatly expanded under the empire of Kubla Khan. Concomitantly, two coastal Nayar chiefdoms with strategic ports expanded into small kingdoms by conquering the surrounding inland chiefdoms and monopolizing their trade. In the north was the Kolattiri kingdom centered about Mount Eli, and in the south the kingdom of Travancore or Venad, centered

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175 about Quilon (Ricci, 1931: 326–330; Logan, 1951, I: 282–283). Chi-
439 nese trade declined in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries,
●635 but that of Muslim Arabs (who had visited the coast from the eighth century) greatly increased. In the fourteenth century a third Nayar kingdom around Calicut, in the center of the coast, had expanded with the help of Arab merchants (Major, 1857: 13–18). By the time the Portuguese arrived, in 1498, Calicut practically monopolized the Arab trade, and the Zamorin (king) of Calicut held overlordship from Pudupattanam south to Porakkad (Logan, 1951, I: 293–294; Ayyar, 1938: 273, 291). Trickles of trade continued in Kolattunad and Travancore, but the kings there had grown weak by comparison with the Zamorin. Kolattunad had become divided into three virtually independent little kingdoms, and the Travancore ruler had surrendered large powers to the subordinate local chiefs of his realm. Two other small kingdoms remained independent in the interior to the east of Calicut: Walluvanad and Palghat.

175 The period 1498 to 1792 was one of bitter struggle between Euro-
439 pean and Middle Eastern powers, who formed shifting alliances with
648 native rulers for control of the pepper trade. By 1600 the Portuguese had practically abolished the Arab trade, but they were themselves driven from the coast by the Dutch in 1663. The English reached Kerala in 1615 and the French in 1725. Each European trading power allied itself with one or another Nayar ruler and took part in successive battles until, in 1766, the northern half of the coast was overrun by Muslim armies from Mysore to the northeast. The Mysorean occupation ended in 1792 with the settlement of the whole area by the English East India Company and the establishment of the British bureaucratic political system (Logan, 1951, I: 404–473).

175 Shortly before the Mysorean invasions Kerala was divided into nine
648 small kingdoms and a number of border chiefdoms owing only ten-
635 uous allegiance to some king. The British after 1792 amalgamated the seven northern kingdoms (Kolattunad, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Kadattunad, Calicut, Walluvanad, and Palghat) to form the Malabar District of Madras Province, pensioned their rulers, and brought them under a British district officer responsible to the government of Madras. Cochin, a small kingdom in the center of the coast, remained a native state under its own ruler subject to the advice of a British Resident. So also did the southernmost kingdom of Travancore, whose ruler had already in the 1730's established a standing army, dispossessed his Nayar nobles, and formed a bureaucratic government. Kerala remained divided in this way until after the in-

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dependence of India in 1947. Cochin and Travancore were amalgamated in 1949 and, under popular pressure for the formation of linguistic states, the whole area was reunited as the State of Kerala in 1956. This state elected a Communist government in 1957.

After 1498 there were certain changes in Kerala's economy. Trade and towns expanded, gunpowder was introduced and wars became more devastating, and cash transactions became more prevalent among the aristocratic castes in villages (K. M. Panikkar, 1929: chap. XIV). But the basic form of the caste system and the pyramidal system of kingdoms, subordinate chiefdoms, and villages persisted with little change until after the Mysorean conquest. The Calicut kingdom gradually declined after 1498, for the Portuguese allied themselves with the small kingdom of Cochin to the south, freed it from Calicut's overlordship, and used it as a base from which to expel the Arabs and subdue the Zamorins. Nevertheless, with fluctuating boundaries Calicut remained the most powerful kingdom until the 1730's.

Although its internal political boundaries have shifted continually, Kerala is today still divisible into three major cultural areas. These are distinguished by differences in the names and numbers of the castes who occupy them, in dress, dietetic habits and ritual practices, and in the kinship systems of the several Hindu castes. The northern area, north of the Kora River, comprises the former kingdoms of Nileswaram, Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad. This was the area dominated by the Kolattiri kings in the fourteenth century and at various periods thereafter. In British times it became the northern part of Malabar District and the southern part of South Canara District; I shall call it North Kerala. The central area comprises the former kingdoms of Calicut, Walluvanad, Palghat, and Cochin. It was overrun by the Zamorins of Calicut at various times between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. In British times it formed South Malabar District and Cochin State; I shall refer to it as Central Kerala. All the southern area (until recently, Travancore State) was at one time or another subordinate to the kings of Travancore. The political systems—and consequently the internal caste divisions of the Nayars and the forms of their kinship systems—differed in these three areas. Much confusion has arisen in the past because of failure to distinguish between the three regions. It has been assumed that the Nayars had one kinship system, whereas in fact they had three, with different terminological structures. In this paper I describe Nayar kinship in two kingdoms of Central Kerala: Calicut and Cochin.

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Caste and Territorial Divisions

THE HIGH CASTES

564 *The Nambudiri Brahmans* Throughout Kerala the Nambudiri Brahmans were the highest Hindu caste and the ritual and scholastic leaders. Today they form one hundredth of the population (Censuses of Madras, Cochin, and Travancore, 1931). Carriers of the Sanskrit language and of ancient Vedic culture, they are thought to have entered Malabar from the eastern plateau sometime after the fall of the Chera kingdom (Logan, 1951, I: 121, 243; Ayyar, 1938: 47). Most Nambudiris were landlords of substance, but they included a number of ranked occupational sub-castes of varying wealth. The greater landlords were managers of large temples, promulgators of religious law, legal advisers of the kings, priests of public sacrifices, or philosophers and Vedic scholars. The lower sub-castes, whose members owned smaller estates, included temple priests, physicians, and household priests and professional cooks who officiated at ceremonies in the Nayar castes.

564 The Nambudiris ranked ritually above the kings and were to some extent above and outside the political systems of the kingdoms. Alone of all the castes, they moved unmolested between enemy kingdoms. They held ceremonies attended by their caste fellows from all parts of Kerala and carried on their system of intra-caste administration independently of the administration of justice within the kingdoms. For the latter purpose they divided Kerala into *gramams* (caste areas) (Logan, 1951, I: 120). Over the whole region a dignitary called the Aravancheri Tamburakkal, who lived in the Calicut kingdom, was universally acknowledged as the ritual and administrative leader of the Nambudiris (Buchanan, 1807: 423–426; Ayyar, 1938: 23). He held the right to install the kings of both Calicut and Cochin, even though these rulers were traditionally at enmity. The field of social relations of the Nambudiris was thus the whole of Kerala and they played a role not dissimilar to that of the medieval Catholic church. Descent among the Nambudiris was patrilineal.

564 *The High-Caste Nayars* Below the Nambudiri Brahmans in ritual rank came the royal *matrilineages* of the several kingdoms. Those in Central Kerala were Calicut, Walluvanad, Palghat, and Cochin. Although of Nayar origin, each of these lineages considered itself superior in ritual rank to the Nayar subjects within its kingdom. Between kingdoms, royal lineages disputed for rank and would not intermarry. Although exogamous, therefore, each royal lineage considered

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itself a separate caste. The Cochin lineage claimed descent from the Perumals and ranked as Kshattriyas, the second of the four divisions of all-India Hindu society. The Walluvanad, Palghat, and Calicut lineages, once vassals of the Perumals, were not strictly recognized as Kshattriyas in Brahmin theory and held the title of Samantans. Normally, the oldest man in each royal lineage held the kingship and administered customary law with assistance from Brahman advisers.

Each kingdom was divided into *nāds* (chiefdoms or districts). In the Zamorin's kingdom at the height of its power some of these chiefdoms had once been independent small kingdoms. They were conquered by Calicut in the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries. They continued to be ruled by their traditional monarchs, who paid tribute to Calicut. Among them were the chiefdoms of Beypore, Chaliyam, Parappanad, Bettem, and Punnattur. Each of these ruling lineages, although feudatory, retained a higher ritual rank than the Zamorin by virtue of its more ancient tradition of government. Similarly, some chiefdoms of the Cochin kingdom were governed by conquered feudatory rulers of higher ritual rank than the royal lineage. The small kingdoms of Walluvanad and Palghat, however, had no feudatories of higher rank than their royal lineages.

The other chiefdoms of a kingdom were ruled by hereditary Nayar chiefs (*nāduvaṙs*) originally appointed by the king, and these chiefs had more restricted powers than the feudatory monarchs. Most of them held the title of Samantan, but all were considered of lower ritual rank than their royal lineages. The Zamorin's kingdom (the largest) appears to have had twenty-eight such district chiefs in the fifteenth century. Each chiefly lineage, like each royal lineage, tended to regard itself as a separate caste acknowledging no peers.

Each chiefdom was divided into *dēsams* or villages. A village seems to have covered anything from one to four square miles, comprising both dry garden land and flats of alluvial rice land. Most of the land in each village was normally owned by one landlord family of higher ritual rank than the other occupants.

In some villages the land was owned by a Nambudiri patrilineal extended family, whose large house occupied a central position. In others it was owned by one or other branch of the royal lineage as part of the royal domain. There would then be a palace in the village and the senior prince of the household would act as village headman. In other villages the land was owned by the chiefly matrilineage of the district, whether this lineage were of feudatory royal rank or of vassal Samantan rank. Again in this case the chiefly family would live

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European trade shook the foundations of the caste system in other ways. Ports grew larger, and within them European merchants employed Christian converts, artisans, and runaway serfs. Near the ports, serfs sometimes became slaves, being torn from their ancestral lands and sold or hired for cash.

Nevertheless, until the introduction of steam power in the second half of the nineteenth century, the technology and over-all economy of Kerala did not change very radically. Trade was still limited to surplus crops, luxury goods, and metals. Inland villages remained largely self-sufficient, with the lower castes excluded from cash transactions. Upward mobility was virtually confined to Muslims, Christians, and the Hindu aristocrats above the rank of Nayar retainers. It seems to have been this lack of basic change in the technology which allowed the persistence of a strict, hereditary rank order in villages and, within each homogeneous local caste group, of kinship as the main organizing principle.

War and Law

The traditional period was one of perpetual wars between adjacent kingdoms, interrupted only in the rainy seasons. A royal lineage's strength lay in its monopoly of gunpowder, coinage, and customs dues, its ability to use foreign and Muslim ships for naval warfare, and its control of the royal domains both as a source of produce and of Nayar retainers as soldiers. Through its superior wealth and military power a royal lineage could force feudatory princes and vassal nobles to muster soldiers throughout the kingdom in periods of large-scale war. Each district and each village was classified according to the number of Nayar soldiers it could customarily muster for war. In the Zamorin's kingdom the strength of royal feudatories varied between 18,000 and 1,000 Nayars; of Nayar chiefs, between 5,000 and 100; of village headmen, between about 100 and 25 (Ayyar, 1938: 278). Records of the muster of each feudatory were kept by the Nayar clerks of the palace. The primary duty of each chief was to assemble regularly the soldiers of his district for military exercises at the capital, and in time of war to lead them to battle, with the king himself at their head. Within the district military training was organized on a village basis. This might be done by a Nayar village headman, by the chief himself, or, in Brahman villages, by a Nayar military leader (Asan) who acted for the chief or the king. All Nayar boys of the retainer, village headmen, and chiefly and royal

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took place in areas and periods where one trading power was in the ascendant and wished to support a strong ruler with taxes, arms, and shipping, and through him to gain a monopoly of the pepper trade. Such maneuvers went on continually in the Cochin lineage during the period of European trade. In the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century the Cochin lineage disintegrated into five property groups. The Zamorins to the north, who were expanding with Arab aid, supported the Mutta ("Elder") branch, installed its head as king, and made him feudatory to Calicut. When the Portuguese arrived in 1500 they took up the cause of the Elaya ("Younger") branch, installed them as kings, and ousted the Elder branch and the Zamorin. By 1658 the Younger branch was dying out, as were the three other branches, and only the Elder branch had members available for adoption. Instead of allowing the king to adopt from the Elder branch as they should by custom have done, the Portuguese forced him to adopt from an unrelated lineage, the Rajas of Bettem, who ruled between Cochin and Calicut and who had just defected to the side of Cochin. The Elder branch then sought the help of the Zamorin and the Dutch, and defeated the Cochin Raja and the Portuguese in the war of 1600. The Dutch ousted the Portuguese from Cochin port and installed the Elder branch as their protégés on the throne. Despite such machinations, the Cochin kingdom never became permanently *divided* between branches of the royal lineage, because the office of kingship, supported by one or another merchant power, retained sufficient funds, equipment, and men to restore control over the whole.

The Zamorin's lineage was unusual in that from at least the thirteenth to the mid-eighteenth centuries it apparently did not greatly expand in numbers or divide into separate property groups. Indeed it several times almost died out and in 1705 had to adopt from the Nileswaram lineage, an offshoot of Kolattiri. There were therefore no dynastic wars in Calicut. Even had there been, however, it is safe to say that they would always have culminated in the supremacy of one branch and not in division of the kingdom. This was because throughout the period the Calicut port remained great. With the help of one trading power after another the kingship remained strong and, except for border losses, was able to maintain central judicial control and a system of differentiated political offices within the heart of the kingdom.

Within the Calicut kingdom, which was the strongest until the mid-eighteenth century, dynastic disputes among the district chiefs were usually settled by the king. Succession to district chiefship and to vil-

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Central Kerala Nayar

634 613 635 622 726 succession to district chiefship and to village headships had to be ratified by the king and he could if necessary dispossess disaffected branches and exclude them from office. This was true in the heart of the kingdom. Between Calicut and Cochin, the Zamorins' perpetual enemy, lay several small chiefdoms ruled by formerly independent Kshattriya lineages owing only a tenuous allegiance to one or the other side. In the perennial wars between Calicut and Cochin disaffected branches of these lineages frequently changed sides.

622 635 634 613 Village headmen's lineages, again, had their successions confirmed by the chief or king to whom they owed immediate allegiance. When a property group divided into segments, the tendency seems to have been for the branch having the senior member to retain the ancestral house, the office, and most of the village domain. The king or chief sometimes installed a discarded branch of such a lineage in a vacant office elsewhere, if the office-bearing lineage of that village had died out. His power to do this rested on the fact that an office-bearing lineage which was dying out could not adopt without the consent of the officer of next higher rank. Lopped branches of village headmen's lineages which lost their domains and office seem to have reverted in time to the caste rank of retainer Nayars.

613 554 In most of the royal lineages and many of the chiefly lineages there existed the institution of *sthānams*. These were titles carrying separate estates and sometimes subordinate political offices for the men next in seniority to the ruler, irrespective of branch. The Zamorin's lineage had five sthānams. The first was the Zamorin who had palaces at Calicut and Ponnani. Second came a *sthāni* (title holder) who ruled as chief of Nedunganad, a large chiefdom near the southern boundary whose former ruler had been conquered and executed. The third sthāni regularly patrolled the southern frontier with an army. The fourth and fifth had no political offices but lived on separate estates. The rest of the lineage occupied one or more palaces in Calicut. When a sthāni died, those next below him in age rank all moved up one place. The ruling lineages of Kolattunad, Walluvanad, and Palghat each had five sthānis and many of the lesser chiefs had two or three. Cochin had no sthānis other than the king, but originally the eldest male of the lineage retired into celibacy while the second ruled as [648] king. When the Portuguese came they abolished this rule and installed the king themselves.

[182] When a ruling lineage was financially and militarily strong, sthānams strengthened its rule and helped it to cohere for a longer time than it might otherwise have done. They lifted the senior men out of their

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439 [161] [241] [464] [496] food and other goods. The population expanded and much formerly waste land was brought under cultivation as gardens for the production of coconuts, pepper, cashew nuts, and cinnamon. Higher in the mountains Europeans developed estates of tea, coffee, and spices, which attracted wage labor from villages to the west. The development of the steamship, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, and the entry of railways into Kerala in the 1860's were significant events in this process.

Political and Economic Systems

564 [566] Traditionally, a hierarchy of the major Hindu castes was present as in Central Kerala, except that large areas of North Kerala had no Pulayas or agricultural serfs (*ibid.*, I: 148). Nambudiri Brahmans were fewer than in Central Kerala, but they controlled a small number of temple estates and claimed religious superiority over the Nayar rulers. Muslims were the dominant trading population of the ports and inland trading centers.

439 563

631 The mountainous terrain, heavy rainfall, poor communications, sparse population, and comparatively low productivity made political centralization more difficult than in Central Kerala. The ancient Kolattiri kingdom was divided into chiefdoms and villages in a manner similar to the later kingdom of the Zamorin, but judicial control was perhaps never as well centralized as in the Calicut kingdom. From the fourteenth century, when the Zamorins captured most of the Arab trade, the Kolattiri kingship lost some of its former power. The kingdom disintegrated into three smaller, virtually independent kingdoms—Kolattunad, Kottayam, and Kadattunad—plus a number of small border chiefdoms of uncertain allegiance (*ibid.*, I: 343–344).

175 635 [634]

174 161 635 Each of the three North Kerala kingdoms probably had a population of between 150,000 and 250,000, in contrast to the Calicut kingdom, which seems to have numbered some 600,000 to 720,000 (see note 5, page 473).

175 648 634 635 After 1500 each of the North Kerala rulers sought the help of one or another of the mutually hostile European and Middle Eastern trading powers, thus maintaining a state of fragmentation until the Mysorean conquest. In the struggles of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries some new Nayar chiefs also arose with mushroom rapidity on the basis of European support and gained partially autonomous sway over small groups of villages. Political and social mobility among Nayar aristocrats was thus more marked in North Kerala than in the more stable central kingdoms. Indeed, a North Kerala proverb re-

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marks that "When a high-caste Nayar becomes ripe, he turns into a king."

Low productivity and poor communications perhaps made the exaction of tribute more difficult than in Central Kerala, and this fact, plus the uncertain nature of trade, made the local rulers perennially short of funds. This is probably the reason why, although they were trained for warfare in gymnasia in their villages, Nayars were not regularly conscripted into a national army. Instead, they merely fought sporadically on behalf of local chiefs. Further, chiefs and village headmen were insufficiently strong to bring all the land under their control. Their domains were larger than those of Nayar commoners, but most commoner Nayar property groups were independent small landlords in their own right within their villages. Since they were not full-time warriors and since in many areas they had no serfs, Nayar commoners also did part of their own cultivation on their small estates. Part of their land, however, they leased to Tiyyar tenants as in Central Kerala. The polluting castes of village servants had the same rights and spatial distribution as in Central Kerala. In general, the economic processes of reciprocity and redistribution in villages proceeded in a comparable manner.

As independent warrior-cultivators, the Nayar commoners were not divided into separate castes of retainers owing allegiance as vassals and *kānam* tenants to different kinds of lords. Most villages were nominally under Nayar village headmen. In villages of the Kottayam and Kadattunad kingdoms, both the headman's lineage and those of the Nayar commoners belonged to a large caste called Nambiars, who appear to have intermarried throughout the kingdom. Although of the same general caste as commoners, and not forbidden by religious law from intermarrying equally with commoners, Nambiar village headmen's lineages tended, however, to intermarry only with each other or to take wives only from the commoners, occasionally giving their own women in marriage to chiefs or Brahmans. Chiefs claimed a higher caste rank as Samantan Nambiars, and royalty as Kshattriyas. These aristocratic lineages conducted hypergamous marriages with each other and with Nambudiris as in Central Kerela.

Judicial processes were somewhat less centralized than in the Central kingdoms. At least in theory, grave crimes and civil disputes in urban centers seem to have been tried in royal courts, but most civil disputes inland were apparently tried by local chiefs. Under the chiefs, caste assemblies of neighborhoods took care of crimes against religious law as in the Central kingdoms. Murder among Nayars

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Murder among the Nayars
627 sometimes led to blood feuds between lineages (*ibid.*, I: 195–196).
613 Chiefs could usually cut short a feud between commoner lineages, but
628 even these feuds occasionally ran their course for a generation, although cognatic and affinal ties between lineages helped to bring them to a close. Greater feuds were sometimes waged between the lineages of village headmen or chiefs of adjacent districts, in which the commoner Nayars of each area might participate.

Matrilineal Units

THE CLAN

614 564 Among Nambiar commoners the largest matrilineal unit was the clan (*vamsham* or *illam*). It had the functions of exogamy and mutual hospitality. Common descent was merely stipulated and not demonstrated and the order of segmentation within the clan was unknown. [635] The clan might be dispersed throughout a kingdom or even, perhaps, between kingdoms. Its members might point to a particular village as their original ancestral site, but each clan seems to have been much older and its history less clearly documented than among Nayar retainers in Central Kerela. There is no doubt that clans became much more dispersed in the nineteenth century than they had traditionally been because of the development of new areas of cultivation and increased mobility between villages. However, even traditionally the clan seems to have had more members and a wider spread than in the Central area. Its characteristics may be attributed to several factors. First, Nambiars were not divided into separate retainer castes. Thus, although the majority of commoner marriages were within the village, [582] Nambiars did have greater freedom to marry and move more freely between villages throughout the realm. Lacking a strong superordinate political structure and internal caste differentiation to give form to their relationships, they had larger kinship units. Newcomers to a village probably did not need to become affiliated to its assembly by order [608] of a superior political authority. Instead, they could probably affiliate themselves with their clan fellows and so at once be provided also with classificatory affines in other clans. Second, Nambiars practised 614 564 avunculocal residence; husband and wife lived in the husband's matrilineal ancestral house (Buchanan, 1807: 513–514). Sons normally 591 moved back to their own matrilineal homes at puberty, but daughters [425] moved to their husbands' homes. However, Nambiar fathers occasionally gave privately acquired land to their wives and children when they were able. The children might then settle permanently in

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the wife's taravād was near his own he might divide his time between his own ancestral house and the private house he had built for his wife and her descendants on her ancestral estate.

Although this was contrary to customary law, some men also managed to give jenmam land outright to a wife and her matrilineal descendants, thus founding a new branch taravād through the wife. This practice greatly increased in the nineteenth century, when new gardens were continually being developed on former waste land and when land became freely marketable. In 1896, indeed, a law was finally passed enabling a man's wife and children to inherit half of his self-acquired intestate property (Malabar Marriage Act, 1896). Occasional gifts of land to the wife and her descendants were, however, known long before the British period, although they were against the law. At the political level, kings and chiefs occasionally gave large domains, together with the office of chief or village headman, to their wives' matrilineal descendants. The chiefships of both Nileswaram and Kadattunad are said to have been formed in this way by gifts from Kolattiri kings before the fourteenth century; both later became virtually independent kingdoms (Logan, 1951, I: 343; Ayyar, 1938: 4). Many smaller territories and political offices were similarly bequeathed during the period of European trade. On a smaller scale, the kāranavan of a Nambiar taravād sometimes managed to take out a portion of the fallow jenmam land of his own taravād, cultivate it, and give it to his wife and her descendants. Naturally, such gifts, which were in no sense a part of acknowledged lawful custom, led to disputes with the donor's matrilineal kin and sometimes, in the next generation, to feuds between lineages.

Gifts of land or improvements by a man to his wife's descendants led to the existence of branch property groups, called *tāvari-taravāds*, within the main property group. After the donor's death the wife's kāranavan might manage such a small estate on behalf of her branch, retaining the income separately for her and her children. More commonly, the donor's eldest son became the kāranavan of the tāvari property, while the branch also continued to receive its ancestral dues out of the property of the taravād as a whole. When a stirpital division of the whole taravād occurred, this branch might claim both its separate estate and its share of the ancestral property. If the donor had been a chief and the gift was large, the branch to which it was given might, however, choose to leave its taravād without taking a share of the ancestral estate and to found a new taravād home on its new land. Tāvari-taravāds were, however, rare among commoners

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CULTS OF THE DEAD AMONG THE NĀYARS

By E. Kathleen Gough

IN this paper I shall attempt both a sociological and a psychological analysis of Nāyar cults of the dead. That is to say, I shall try to relate the role-structure and social functions of the cults to those of legal and economic institutions, and to relate the emotional content of the cults to that of certain relationships among the living.

The Nāyars[1] are a high, matrilineal caste of landholders and salaried workers. Some four to seven matrilineal lineages of commoner Nāyars traditionally occupied the high caste area of a village. They served a Nāyar or Nambūdiri Brahman village headman, and had authority over tenants, artisans, and serfs of lower caste. The lineage was exogamous, had a depth of about ten to fifteen generations and was concerned in village government. But the more significant economic unit was a lineage segment (*taravād*), whose members jointly owned property including an ancestral house. The eldest man of this group was its legal guardian (*kāranavan*).

Before British rule began in 1792, the Malabar Coast comprised a number of kingdoms. I am concerned with Nāyars of villages in the former Cochin kingdom, in the center of the coast, and with those of villages in the former Kottayam kingdom in the north.

In Cochin, the country was relatively flat, fertile, and densely populated. The Nāyars were the professional military caste. For a part of each year they tended to be absent from the village in military training or war. Women remained on their ancestral estates under the legal guardianship of the *kāranavan* and were maintained by the work of tenants and serfs. Probably largely as a result of the relatively mobile military occupation of the men, plural marital unions were customary. A woman might have six or eight husbands of her own or a higher subcaste, and a man, any number of Nāyar wives of his own or a lower subcaste. Residence was duolocal: spouses lived separately in their natal homes and a husband visited his wife in her home at night. Exact physiological paternity was, clearly, often unknown, and in any case a man had no rights in nor obligations to his children. Among Nāyars of this area, therefore, contrary to Murdock's generalization,[2] the elementary family was not institutionalized as a legal, economic or residential unit.

In Kottayam, the terrain was mountainous and jungly, the area more sparsely populated, and the kingdom less centralized. The Nāyars were cultivating landowners and only occasional warriors. The hilly and jungly terrain and the sparsity of population made duolocal residence impracticable. In most cases a man took his wife to live in his ancestral household in avunculocal residence, and children were brought up until adolescence in the houses of their fathers. There was some polygyny, but polyandry was forbidden. Fathers had morally though not legally recognized rights in and

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
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.113 G. Roheim, *Psychoanalysis and Anthropology* (New York, 1950), pp. 134, 135, 432; F. L. K. Hsu, *Under the Ancestors' Shadow* (New York, 1948), pp. 240-243; Mead, 1949, pp. 40-41; J. W. M. Whiting and I. L. Child, *Child Training and Personality* (New Haven, 1953), pp. 263-304.

[12] Nāyar *Kāraṇavans* are of course not ancestors in the strict sense. However, I use this term for convenience as they fulfill roles similar to those of ancestors in many patrilineal societies.

[13] For an account of Īrava social organization and culture, see A. Aiyappan, *Iravas* and *Culture Change*, Bull. Madras Govt. Mus., 5 (1945).

[14] M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs* (Oxford, 1952), pp. 158-165.

[15] For a brief account of Tamil Brahman kinship, see E. K. Gough, "Brahman Kinship in a Tamil Village," *American Anthropologist*, XVIII, (1956), 826-853.

[16] See, e.g., Thurston, V (1909), 152-240.

[17] Fortes, 1949, p. 235.

[18] H. E. J. Stanley, trans., Duarte Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century* (Hakluyt, 1886), p. 15.

[19] R. Rowlandson, trans., Sheikh Zein-ud-deen, *Tohfut ul Mujahideen*. An Offering to Warriors Who Shall Fight in Defence of Religion Against Infidels (Hakluyt, 1883), p. 63.

[20] A. C. Burnell, trans., *The Voyage of John Hughyen Van Linschoten to the East Indies* (From the Old English Translation of 1598) (Hakluyt, 1885), p. 284.

[21] All castes on the southwest coast bury or cremate the dead in the southwest corner of the ancestral garden. This custom contrasts with that of Hindus in the eastern districts, who burn or bury the dead on communal sites, each owned jointly by a caste community, outside the residential area of the village.

[22] The castes of agricultural serfs are absent in Kottayam, agricultural labor being done by Īrava tenants or by the Nāyars themselves.

[23] This form of propitiation of alien ghosts in Kottayam is called a *teyyam tira*. It closely resembles the *kāraṇavu tēṛē* of the neighboring Coorgs (Srinivas, 1952, pp. 158-165.) In Coorg, however, lower caste officiants impersonate the Coorg *taravād's* own ancestors. In Malabar, lower caste propitiants impersonate only alien ghosts attached to the Nāyar *taravād*.

[24] Witchcraft (*edi*), a witch (*ediyan*). For a more detailed account of witchcraft, see Thurston, VI (1909), 36-41, 122-127.

[25] M. Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa* (Manchester, 1954).

[26] Gluckman, *The Role of the Sexes in Wiko Circumcision Ceremonies. Social Structure*, M. Fortes, ed. (Oxford, 1949), pp. 145-167.

[27] All of these statements apply to conditions in 1947-9. I observed no major changes in ritual activities during a brief revisit in 1952. The Malabar Coast, as the newly formed State of Kerala, elected a Communist government in April 1957, and I have little information on conditions after that date.

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778 All the land about it, measuring a mile square, is said to
423 belong to it.- This would be enormous property, as the
[635] taluk where this kavoo is situated is one of the richest in Travancore. A trifle is given by the Sircar every year. If more funds are required, the Nambiyadi is expected to meet them from his own private income. The grove and its temples cover an immense oblong space measuring about 16 acres in extent. The inmates of the Illam are
[688] the poojaries of the gods in this grove. It is believed
[825] that whenever the poojah is not performed with the strictest personal purity or care to small details, the serpent gods get offended, which feeling is exhibited by
778 the largest cobras coming out of the grove. It should be
776 remembered that, as a rule, the serpents are not seen out
825 of their holes, though hundreds of them are known to exist in these large groves. When any is seen, especially if a real cobra, the village astrologer is consulted, who readily finds out the cause of the wrath of the serpent gods, and steps are taken immediately to pacify them by propitiatory ceremonies. The people believe in these ceremonies most implicitly. That is not a mere form with them. In a house in North Travancore, where
776 I lived some years, there used to be seen now and again
825 snakes of all kinds, and in answer to my request to the servant of my landlord to keep the kavoo neat, he invariably said, "Please, sir, order some lights and milk to the kavoo," for this man most sincerely believed that this was the only effective way of keeping out the snakes from view. He did not seem to believe that there was any good in keeping the premises neat and clean. It should here be noted that a true Hindu population never pelt at or harm the snakes when they are seen. They are objects of worship. One of our retired officials told me that some years ago, when he was young and new to the place, he was puzzled by some of the parties present at his cutcherry telling him that the 'god was coming.' The crowd made way, and on rising, this official was horrified to see that the god referred to was a live cobra. This village he spoke of, even now abounds with serpents, but strange to say, these reptiles seldom harm man. They are evidently become domesticated animals, for we seldom hear of snake-bites in that village, though the general belief is that there are more snakes there than rats. The people also seem to be quite at home with them, for they do not get put out when they see these reptiles."

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CUSTOMS, GAMES, FESTIVALS, ETC.

Hamilton in his "New Account of the East Indies" published in 1744, writes :—

"It was an ancient custom for the Samorin (Zamorin, then the local potentate) to reign but twelve years and no longer. If he died before his term was expired it saved him a troublesome ceremony of cutting his own throat on a public scaffold erected for that purpose. He first made a feast for all his nobility and gentry, who were very numerous. After the feast, he saluted his guests, went on the scaffold, and very neatly cut his own throat in the view of the assembly. His body was, a little while after, burned with great pomp and ceremony, and the grandees elected a new Samorin. Whether that custom was a religious or a civil ceremony I know not, but it is now laid aside, and a new custom is followed by the modern Samorin, that a jubilee is proclaimed throughout his dominion, at the end of twelve years, and a tent is pitched for him in a spacious plain, and a great feast is celebrated for ten or twelve days with mirth and jollity, guns firing night and day, so at the end of the feast any four of the guests that have a mind to gain a crown by a desperate action in fighting their way through 30, or 40,000 of his guards, and kill the Samorin in his tent, he that kills him succeeds to him in his empire. In Anno 1695 one of these jubilees happened and the tent pitched near Ponnany (Ponani) a seaport of his about 16 leagues to the southward of Calicut. There were but three men that would venture on that desperate action, who fell on, with sword and target, among the guards, and after they had killed and wounded many were themselves killed. One of the *Desperadoes* had a nephew of fifteen or sixteen years of age, that kept close by his uncle in the attack on the guards, and when he saw him fall, the youth got through the guards into the tent and made a stroke at his majesty's head and had certainly dispatched him, if a large brass lamp which was burning over his head, had not marred the blow; but before he could make another, he was killed by the guards; and I believe the same Samorin reigns yet. I chanced to come that time along the coast and heard the guns for two or three days and nights successively."

Here must be made an excerpt from the "Malabar Manual" as its author Mr. Logan, while Collector (chief administrative officer) of Malabar, made excellent use of his opportunities to delve into the ancient archives of the district.

"The *Kêrala Mâhâtmya* so far corroborates Hamilton's story, that it declares the king used to be deposed at this festival, but there is no mention of self-immolation. although it is quite possible the deposed kings may have

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occasionally adopted this mode of escape from the chagrin of not being re-elected by their adherents." He goes on to say what Mr. Jonathan Duncan wrote about this festival, of which his account appears in the first volume of the Transactions of the Bombay Literary Society. The festival was held last in 1743.

"Those who acknowledged the Zamorin's suzerainty sent flags in token of fealty; and the places where these flags used to be hoisted at festival times are still pointed out. The Valluvanād Raja, who is still represented in the management of the Tirunāvāyi temple by one of the four Brahman *Kārālars*, instead of sending a flag used to send men called *Chāvers* (men who have elected to die) whose office it was to endeavour to cut their way through the Zamorin's guards to his throne in a manner presently to be described. If they had succeeded in killing him—as on the occasion cited by Hamilton, whose statement except as to date, is moreover corroborated by tradition—it is uncertain what would have happened; but probably if a capable Raja had been ruling in Valluvanād at such a time, popular opinion would have endowed him with suzerainty, for the Nāyar militia were very fickle, and flocked to the standard of the man who was fittest to command and who treated them the most considerately.

"With the kind assistance of the present Zamorin, Maharaja Bahadur, the records of his family have been examined and a complete account obtained of the events attending the festival held in 1683 A.D., the festival next preceding that alluded to by Hamilton.

"The festival used to continue for twenty-eight days every twelfth year when the planet Jupiter was in retrograde motion in the sign of *Karkadagam* or Cancer or the Crab, and at the time of the eighth lunar asterism in the month of Makaram the festival used to culminate.

"On the occasion in question the Zamorin some months beforehand sent orders for the preparation of the necessary timber and bamboos for the temporary buildings required at *Tirunāvāyi* and the materials were floated down stream from the Aliparamba Chirakkal lands.

"Then exactly two months before the opening day he sent out a circular to his followers worded as follows:—

'Royal writing to the *Akampati Janam* (body-guards).

'On the 5th Makaram 858 is *Mahāmakha Talpuyam* (time of the eighth lunar asterism in the festival season), and the *Lōkars* (chief people of each locality) are required to attend at Tirunāvāyi as in olden times.

'Mangātt Raman and Tinayancheri are sent to collect and bring you in regular order for the Mahāmakham.'

"The Zamorin timed himself to arrive at Tirunāvāyi on the day after that appointed for the arrival of his followers, and the

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lucky moment for the setting out on this particular occasion on the last day's stage of the journey was at the rising of the constellation of Aquarius.

"The *Tirunāvāyi* temple stands on the north bank of the Ponnāni river close to the present line of railway. Passengers by train can catch a glimpse of it by looking across the level expanse of paddy-fields which lie south of the sixth telegraph post on the three hundred and eighty-second mile of the railway. There is a modest clump of trees on the river bank hiding the temple, the western gateway of which faces a perfectly straight piece of road a little over half a mile in length stretching from the temple gateway westwards to the elevated ridge hemming in the paddy-fields on the west. This road is but little raised above the level of the paddy flat. Directly facing this straight piece of road as the elevated ridge is reached there are three or perhaps four terraces, the outlines of which may still be traced in the face of the precipitous bank.

"A little to one side of the upper terrace are the ruins of a strongly built powder magazine, and on the flat ground above and on both sides of the fine avenue shading the public road at this place is ample space for the erection of temporary houses.

"In a neighbouring enclosure under cultivation is a disused well of fine proportions and of most solid construction.

"From the upper terrace alluded to a commanding view is obtained facing eastwards of the level rice-plain at foot, of the broad placid river on the right backed by low hills, of higher flat-topped laterite plateaus on the left, their lower slopes bosomed in trees, and, in the far distance, of the great chain of Western Ghâts with the Nilgiris in the extreme left front hardly distinguishable in their proverbial colour from the sky above them. It was on this spot, on a smooth plateau of hard laterite rock, raised some 30 to 40 feet above the plain, that the Zamorin used several times in the course of the festival to take his stand with the sword of Chēramān Perumāl, the last emperor, in his hand.

"The sword is and has been for centuries, slowly rusting away in its scabbard, but it is not alone on it that the Zamorin depends for his safety, for the plain below him is covered with the 30,000 Nâyars of Ernâd, the 10,000 of Polanâd and numberless petty dependent chieftains, each counting his fighting men by the hundred or the thousand or by thousands. Away on the right across the river are the camps of the second prince of the Zamorin's family and of the dependent Punnattūr Raja; the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth princes' camps too are close at hand in the left front behind the temple, and behind the terrace itself is the Zamorin's camp.

"The whole scene is being made gay with flags as an elephant is being formally caparisoned with a chain of solid gold

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with 'one hundred and fourteen small links and one clasp, making in all one hundred and fifteen'—as the record specifically testifies—and with golden bosses and other ornaments too numerous to be detailed. But this part of the ceremonies is not to be permitted to pass unchallenged, for it signifies in a formal manner the Zamorin's intention to assume the *rôle* of *Rakshapurashan* or protector of the festivities and of the people there assembled. On the instant, therefore, there is a stir among the crowd assembled near the western gate of the temple directly facing at half a mile distance the Zamorin's standing-place on the upper terrace.

"From this post, running due east in a perfectly straight line to the western gate of the temple, is the straight piece of road already described, but the road itself is clear and the armed crowd on the plain, it is seen, are hemmed in by barrel palisadings running the full length of the road on both sides. Two spears' length apart the palisades are placed, and the armed crowd on either hand, consisting on this occasion of the thirty thousand Ērnād Nāyars, it is seen, are all carrying spears. The spearmen may not enter that narrow lane, and by the mere weight of their bodies present an impossible obstacle to the free passage of the foemen now bent on cutting down the Zamorin in his pride of place.

"Amid much din and firing of guns the *morituri*, the *Chaver* Nāyars, the elect of four Nāyar houses in Valluvanād, step forth from the crowd and receive the last blessings and farewells of their friends and relatives. They have just taken of the last meal they are to eat on earth at the house of the temple representative of their chieftain; they are decked with garlands and smeared with ashes. On this particular occasion it is one of the houses of Putumanna Panikkar who heads the fray. He is joined by seventeen of his friends—Nāyar or Māppilla or other arms-bearing caste men—for all who so wish may fall in with sword and target in support of the men who have elected to die.

"Armed with swords and targets alone they rush at the spearmen thronging the palisades; they 'winde and turn their Bodies, as if they had no Bones, casting them forward and backward, high and low, even to the Astonishment of the Beholders,' as worthy Master Johnson describes them in a passage already quoted (page 137). But notwithstanding the suppleness of their limbs, notwithstanding their delight and skill and dexterity in their weapons, the result is inevitable and is prosaically recorded in the chronicle thus: 'The number of *Chavers* who came and died early morning the next day after the elephant began to be adorned with gold trappings—being *Putumanna Kantur Menon* and followers—were 18.

"At various times during the ten last days of the festival the same thing is repeated. Whenever the Zamorin takes his

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stand on the terrace, assumes the sword and shakes it, men rush forth from the crowd at the west temple gate only to be impaled on the spears of the guardsmen who relieve each other from day to day. The turns for this duty are specifically mentioned in the chronicle thus: 'on the day the golden ornaments are begun to be used the body-guard consists of the thirty thousand; of Ellaya Vakkayil Vellōdi (and his men) the second day, of Netiyiruppu,* Mūttarāti Tirumulpād (and his men) the third day of Ittatūrnād,† Nambiyātiri Tirumulpād (and his men) the fourth day, of Ērnād Mūnāmkūr,‡ Nambiyātiri Tirumulpād (and his men) the fifth day, of Ērnād,§ Elankur Nambiyāttiri Tirumalpād (and his men) the sixth day, and of the ten thousand,‖ the Calicut Talachanna Nāyar and Ērnād Mēnon the seventh day.'

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"The chronicle is silent as to the turns for this duty on the eighth, ninth and tenth days. On the eleventh day, before the assembly broke up and after the final assault of the *Chāvers* had been delivered, the *Ernad Elankur Nambiyātiri Tirumalpad* (the Zamorin next in succession) and the *Tirumanisseri Nambūtiri* were conveyed in palanquins to the eastern end of the narrow palisaded lane, and thence they advanced on foot, prostrating themselves four times towards the Zamorin, once at the eastern end of the lane, twice in the middle, and once at the foot of the terraces. And after due permission was obtained they took their places on the Zamorin's right hand.

"After this, so the chronicle runs, it was the duty of the men who have formed the body guard to march up with music and pomp to make obeisance. On this occasion, however, a large portion of the body-guard seems to have been displeased, for they left without fulfilling this duty, and this story corroborates in a marked way the facts already set forth (page 132) regarding the independence and important political influence possessed by the Nāyars as a body.

"The *Ernād Menon* and the *Calicut Talachanna Nāyar* with their followers were the only chiefs who made obeisance in due form to the Zamorin on this occasion, and possibly by the time of the next festival (1695 A.D.), of which Hamilton wrote, the dissatisfaction might have increased among his followers and the Zamorin's life even may have been endangered

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* The fifth Prince of the Zamorin's family.
† The fourth Prince of the Zamorin's family.
‡ The third Prince of the Zamorin's family.
§ The second Prince and heir apparent of the Zamorin's family.
‖ The ten thousand of Pōlanād, the district round about Calicut, formed the Zamorin's own immediate body-guard—Conf. the account contained in the *Kēralolpatti* of how these men were originally selected—Chapter III, section (*a*).

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635 as Hamilton alleges, probably through lack of men to guard him. Tradition asserts that the *Chāver* who managed on one occasion to get through the guards and up to the Zamorin's seat belonged to the family of the Chāndrattil Panikkar.

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"The chronicle winds up with a list of the *Chāvers* slain on this occasion, viz. :—

When the Zamorin was taking his stand on the terrace apparently at the commencement of festivities	5
On the day the elephant was adorned as already stated	18
"The next day of *Chandrattil Panikkar* and followers, the number who came and died	11
'Of *Verkōt Panikkar* and followers the number that came and died the third day.	12
'The number who came to Vakkayūr and died in the four days	4
'The number of *Chāvers* who were arrested at the place where Kalattal Itti Karunākara Menon was, and brought tied to Vakkayūr and put to death	1
'The number of *Chāvers* arrested on the day of the sacrifice, when all the men together made the obeisance below Vakkayūr at the time when the Zamorin was taking his stand, and left tied to the bars, and who were afterwards brought to Vakkayūr and after the ceremony was over and the Zamorin had returned to the palace were put to the sword	4
Total ...	55

"The chronicle does not mention the fact, but a current tradition states that the corpses of the slain were customarily kicked by elephants as far as the brink of the fine well, of which mention has been made, and into which they were tumbled promiscuously. The well itself is nearly filled up with débris of sorts, and a search made at the spot would probably elicit conclusive evidence of the truth of this tradition.

627 "The martial spirit of the Nāyars was in former days kept alive by such desperate enterprises as the above, but in every-day-life the Nāyar used to be prepared and ready to take vengeance on any who affronted him, for he invariably carried weapons, and when a man was slain it was incumbent on his

In the south-east of Malabar, in the neighbourhood of Palghat, the Ônam games are of a rougher character, the tenants of certain jenmis (landlords) turning out each under their own leader, and engaging in sham fights in which there is much rough play. Here, too, is to be seen a kind of boxing which would seem to be a relic of the days of the Roman pugiles using the cestus in combat. The position taken up by the combatants is much the same as that of the pugiles. The Romans were familiar with Malabar from about 30 B.C. to the decline of their power. We may safely assume that the "3,000 lbs. of pepper" which Alarie demanded as part of the ransom of Rome when he besieged the city in the fifth century, came from Malabar.*

Before ending this very incomplete account of customs of the Nâyars, mention must be made of two more of these, both odd. Ever since Châraman Perumal departed from the west coast of India in A.D. 825, setting sail for Arabia and Mecca, having divided up his kingdom, His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore when ascending his throne says: "I ascend the musnud, and will rule until my uncle returns." The "uncle" is Châraman Perumal, the last sovereign of the west coast, who, having embraced the Muhammadan religion which was brought to his shores by Arab traders, proceeded to carry out a wild idea—so goes the legend—of receiving instruction from the Prophet himself! He never returned. To one princeling was given the territory now known as Travancore, and his surviving successor (through the female line of course) is the present Maharajah of Travancore. To another he gave Cochin, the ruler of which State also inherits through the female line. To the ancestor of the Zamorin of Calicut the Perumal gave no territory, as to the others, but he gave him his sword (it is still in existence) with the advice "to die and kill and annex." That he annexed is quite clear, as he was the sovereign not only of Calicut but of the country round about when modern Europeans first visited the west coast of India. Like the Maharajah of Travancore, the Zamorin repeats the formula that he rules until his uncle returns, but in his case it forms part of an elaborate and costly ceremony. The fort, which was the official residence of the Zamorin,

* See Madras Government Museum Catalogue No. 2, Roman Coins, by Mr. Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of the Museum.

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635 was in Calicut,* and it has always been necessary for the new Zamorin to come to this fort in Calicut in a very formal manner. The residences, the kôvilagams of the various branches of the family, lie far to the eastward. The heir to the Zamorinship must make his formal entry into Calicut, for until he does so he is not, strictly speaking, the Zamorin. There is much obscurity as to details of the ceremonial, and I have not been able to note these satisfactorily, so will state merely so much as is undoubtedly correct. The new Zamorin comes to the bank of the Kallai river adjoining Calicut. There he is asked some questions, and he crosses this river in a *boat*—not over the bridge. Arrived on the Calicut side he must partake of some betel-leaf from a Mâppila man dressed as a (Mâppila) woman, or, as some say, from a Mâppila woman† and he says that he assumes the title of Zamorin and rules until his uncle returns. The betel-leaf, received from a (Muhammadan) Mâppila, which he [783] chews, defiles him. He has lost his status in the caste, and he is supposed to be henceforth celibate. It would seem that this old world ceremony is likely to follow the track along which so much of what is interesting in India is disappearing. The late Zamorin never went through it, and he was therefore never, properly speaking, [613] the Zamorin. He held the title perfunctorily, and he was the kârnavan of the immense property of the family; but he could not go "in procession" as Zamorin.‡ There are three unpleasant concomitants to the ceremony. [834] It costs much money. It involves degradation in caste. It compels chastity.

182 562 611 The other odd custom is not one affecting merely an individual and a few with him, but it is a sexual one, and

* There is now no sign of it, though the site is known.

† Those who say that a woman gives the betel-leaf say, very reasonably, that a Mâppila man would never for any consideration or purpose wear a woman's garb. But, on the other hand, it is said the person is and must be a man, and that he dresses for this occasion only, as a woman.

‡ The Zamorin was in Calicut but once since he became Zamorin on the occasion of his visit to His Excellency the Governor of Madras in 1896, and then infringed custom by coming to Calicut without previously undergoing the ceremony. Owing to a death in the family he was under pollution and therefore unable to undertake the ceremony at that time, so he came by train. These old-fashioned customs, written or unwritten, take no count of trains. For example, the modern pilgrims from Northern India find the train very convenient when they wish to visit Rameshvaram. The penance of a life is reduced to a few days in a train. What would the old sages say! So the Zamorin came by train. But he could not go "in procession" along the road as Zamorin, and was obliged to make his visit as an ordinary grandee.

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121 [588] be elucidated only in terms of a psycho-analytic hypothesis. Part V of the essay is therefore an attempt to try out a psycho-analytic approach to Hindu ritual, and to show, with reference to one ceremony, that this approach permits a deeper analysis than is possible if we limit ourselves to a discussion of social function.

The use by anthropologists of psycho-analytic findings to interpret primitive myth and ritual is familiar from modern American writings; it has scarcely been accepted by British anthropologists. I admit that, for anthropologists, psycho-analytic theories must in the long run depend for their authority on analyses of a significant number of individuals in the society whose symbolism it is hoped to interpret. Such data are not, however, at present forthcoming, and in many Indian groups it is doubtful if they will be forthcoming before the myths and rites have died out. In the meantime, as I hope to show, the results of psycho-analytic work in the West can give us insights into the probable unconscious motives behind primitive religious practices, and allow us to formulate new if tentative hypotheses on the connexions between the kinship structure of a group and its religious symbolism.

[129] This essay therefore, while confined to the analysis of one ceremony, fulfils the terms of the Curl Bequest Competition, since it incorporates in a single theory field data recently collected on four Malabar kinship systems; uses the material of other anthropologists (see Aiyappan 1942, 1944; Dubé 1953) who have worked on Indian initiation rites in the past ten years, to advance a sociological interpretation of these rites; and tests, with reference to these rites, certain hypotheses of the British school of psycho-analysts put forward in recent years.[1]

Part I. The Nayar *Tāli*-Rite in South Malabar and Cochin

635 175 564 184 [131] This area is in the centre of the Malabar Coast, south of the Kora River and north of the Travancore-Cochin boundary. Before 1792, it comprised the mutually hostile kingdoms of the Zamorin of Calicut, the Raja of Walluvanād, and the Maharaja of Cochin. The area was temporarily conquered by the Zamorins in the late 15th century and Cochin and Walluvanād were made feudatory kingdoms. Probably for this reason, the Nayar sub-castes of Walluvanād and Cochin correspond closely to those of Calicut, since they owed their existence to a political system common to these three kingdoms. By contrast, the kingdoms to the north and south, where the Zamorins failed to penetrate, had different political systems and correspondingly different hierarchies of Nayar sub-castes. Today, the Nayars of South Malabar and Cochin still show greater cultural similarity, feel greater unity, and intermarry more freely than they do with Nayars to the north or to the south.

175 613 564 635 At the head of each of the central kingdoms was a royal matrilineage. Being at enmity, the royal lineages disputed for rank, would not intermarry, and, though exogamous, formed each a separate caste. Each however acknowledged itself inferior to the Nambûdiri Brahmans (landlords and priests) whose separate caste-organization extended throughout the Malabar Coast, and who were above and outside the laws of the separate kingdoms.

175 564 631 613 Below the royal lineages came the Sāmantans, chiefs (*nāduvaris*) of districts (*nāds*). These owed allegiance to the Raja and had administrative control over the next sub-caste, of Kiriyattil Nayars (called Vellayma Nayars in Cochin), the headmen (*desavaris*) of villages (*desams*). Below the Kiriyattils came three parallel sub-castes: Sûdra Nayars, Charna Nayars (respectively called Illath Sûdras and Swaroopattil Sûdras in Cochin), and Pallichans. Sûdra Nayars were hereditary tenants and retainers in villages where the land was owned by a patrilineal family of Nambûdiri Brahmans. Charna Nayars were retainers in villages owned by *nāduvari* or *desavari* lineages. Pallichans owed similar allegiance in villages owned by a branch of the

[1] For the psycho-analytic interpretation of this essay I am chiefly indebted to Freud (1913, 1918, 1919), Ernest Jones (1931, 1951), Melanie Klein (1932), and Roheim (1950).

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949)1955 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

588 collapsed and the old system of differential land-rights between Nambūdiris and rulers on
564 the one hand and their Nayar tenants on the other has been seriously undermined. Yet even
178 today Nayars remark with pride that their lineage has 'fathers' in the lineages of their former landlords and chiefs, while chiefs and royalty alike revere their Nambūdiri *genitors*, and boast that the blood of these Gods of the earth is running in their veins.

131 ## Part II. The Nayar *Tali*-Rite in North Malabar

133 North Malabar lies north of the Kora River, being the old kingdoms of Kolattiri,
Kurumbrattiri, and Kadattunad. Except for the coast-towns expanded by Europeans, it is
361 sparsely populated and mountainous; part of it is forest. Villages lie separated by hill ranges,
usually as clusters of houses on the hillsides surrounding small wet paddy-flats in the valleys.
[635] This contrasts with South Malabar and Cochin, where the coastal plain is wider, paddy-land extensive, and settlement usually continuous between villages.

175 Perhaps because of its difficult environment, North Malabar did not before 1792 approach
631 the degree of political centralization achieved in the central area. The Kolattiri Rajas, it is true, temporarily conquered Kottayam, Kurumbranad, and Kadattunad, but the area was never consolidated as was the Zomorin's kingdom. Within the small kingdoms, *nāduvaris*
[628] fought each other and rebelled against their Rajas, allying themselves with different rulers as suited their needs of the moment. Neighbouring *desavaris* sometimes fought each other within
[627] the *nād*, while within the *desam*, *kudipaga* (lineage-feud) persisted till modern times.

564 Consistent with this lack of political centralization, high-class Nayars were not divided
631 into sub-castes with administrative and occupational functions. Instead they had exogamous clans, dispersed between many villages. In Kottayam and Kolattunad the bulk of Nayars were Nambiars, independent land-owners owing only nominal allegiance to a chief. *Desavaris*,
613 appointed by the Raja or the *nāduvari*, had administrative powers in their villages but belonged
423 to the same sub-caste as other Nambiars. In most villages the land was divided between the Nayar property-groups as owners, Nayar tenancies being less common than in the south.
[614] *Nāduvari* lineages, however, usually owned the land in the whole village where they lived, employed Nambiar tenants as retainers, and claimed superior caste-rank, calling themselves Samantan Nambiars. Nambūdiri Brahmans are fewer in the north than in the south, especially since the Muslim invasions from Mysore in the 1760s, when many fled to Travancore. Those who remain live as landlords in widely separated villages, with local Nambiar lineages as retainers. The Nayar servant castes are spatially distributed as in the south. The lower polluting castes of manual workers are present in similar proportions, but Tiyyars and their washermen and barbers are matrilineal in North Malabar, patrilineal in the south.

613 *The Nayar Kinship System.* North Malabar Nayars, though trained in arms in the private
[701] gymnasia of their lineages, were not recruited as a permanent militia of the kingdom. Instead they cultivated their own lands with the aid of Tiyyar tenants, the serf castes being absent over
[566] most of the area. It seems largely because of this difference of occupation, North Malabar Nayars are virilocal: a wife moves on marriage to the ancestral house of her husband, and
591 remains with him with rare exceptions till his death. Her children are brought up by their
613 father and commonly return to their own lineage at puberty. A boy then begins to manage his *taravād* property under the direction of his *kāranavan*, while a girl is shortly afterwards
594 married, from the lineage house, by common consent of her *kāranavan* and her father, often to
[582] the *kāranavan*'s son or to a maternal nephew of the father.

586 Divorce is permitted, but is rarer than in the south. Polygyny is rare, polyandry even
595 traditionally forbidden. A cuckolded husband formerly cut off the hair of his wife and returned
684 her to her lineage. The *genitor* has customary rights in and obligations to his children. In
851

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

are treated to a sumptuous dinner, and at the auspicious hour the bridegroom and his party proceed to a conspicuous part of the house, where a seat is specially provided for him. On either side of the seat and a little in front of it, are placed two lighted lamps. There the bridegroom and the bride make obeisance to the *káranavans* and other elderly men present there, distribute presents of money to the Brahmans who pronounce their benediction upon the conjugal pair. The bridegroom or his *káranavans* in the northern parts of the State give her the wedding dress in which she is dressed. The bride is then ushered in, either by her mother or by an elderly member of the family when cloths are given to the bride by the bridegroom. In some places the bridegroom and his party chew betel leaf and nut, while they chat with the women. After a while, the party begins to break up, one by one, wishing the couple all happiness, and the women, departing one by one, leaving the couple alone, one of them closing the door from outside. About daybreak, next morning, the bridegroom departs from the house, leaving under the pillow a sum of money according to his means. The *sambandham* is now complete. The woman resides in her family, and her husband visits her there. A few days after this, the bridegroom's mother or some senior woman of his family sends some cloths including *piva mundus* (superior cloths) and *thórtha mundus* (towels) and also some gingelly oil for her use during the next six months. Every six months, she does the same, and on the festivals of *Onam*, *Vishu* and *Thiruvithira* she is given a little money, arecanut, betel, tobacco and banana. Before long the women of the bridegroom's family express their wish to see her, and have her brought to their family by a few women of the former. She stays there for a few days and is sent back to her own house with presents of ornaments and clothes from senior women of the house. After this she is at liberty to visit her husband's house on any day, auspicious or inauspicious.

In the Chittur and Talapilly Taluks of the State as also in the Palghat Taluk of South Malabar, this form of marriage is called *Kidakkóra* or *Kidakka kalyánam* (the bed chamber ceremony). As part of this ceremony, a declaration is made by one of the bridegroom's party to the senior female of the bride's house in the presence of the assembled guests in the following terms:— " Let this youth visit this damsel for

Chapter 1

The Setting

KERALA IS THE smallest State in the whole of India.[1] It is a narrow strip of land along the western coast of India. It has an area of 14,992 square miles[2] and the coastal line is nearly 360 miles. The breadth of the State varies from 20 to 75 miles, as one moves from the extreme north to the middle. Its boundaries touch the State of Mysore in the north and that of erstwhile Madras in the east and south-east. It lies between 8°15′ and 12°45′N latitude and 74°50′ and 77°30′E longitude.

1.2 Kerala was created in 1956 at the time of the reorganization of the State through the integration of the erstwhile State of Travancore-Cochin and the Malabar district and the Kasargod taluk in South Kanara district of the erstwhile Madras State. At the same time Travancore-Cochin lost Kanyakumari, part of the Trivandrum district and Shencottah, part of the Quilon district, to Madras State. However, the net area of the State increased by about two-thirds after the reorganization of the State. Prior to the formation of Kerala as a separate State, Travancore-Cochin was administratively divided into four districts, while Malabar was a single district. At the time of integration, Malabar was broken up into three districts. Subsequently, during 1957 two new districts, viz., Alleppey and Ernakulam were carved out of the territory belonging to Trichur, Kottayam and Quilon. The State, therefore, now comprises nine districts. The total length of the State from its northern extremity to the southern tip is about 360 miles. But its width is nowhere more than 75 miles.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

1.3 The State territory may be broadly classified into three natural sub-divisions, the highland, the midland and the lowland. Western Ghats which range along the eastern border of the State form the highland. This is mostly a mountainous and rocky terrain ranging in height from 3,000 ft. to 8,000 ft. Anamudi, the highest peak of the Western Ghats (8,837 ft.) is located in the Kottayam district. The highland is thickly forested in its upper ranges, while in the lower ranges the forests are interspersed with plantations.

1.4 On the western fringe of the State are the lowlands which stretch along the coastal plain. Coconut palms, which cover most of this area, lend a richness to the landscape of the region. The soil in this plain is sandy. Coir-making and fishing are the two main occupations. Sandwiched between the lowland and the highland

[1] Excluding the Union Territories.

[2] *Statistical Outline of Kerala State*, Department of Statistics, Government of Kerala.

11: India G-4, 5 (1960-1961) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll

of paddy. This would not only give additional production of pulses which are deficit in the State, but also enrich the soil by leaving a nitrogen residue, and thereby constitute a better rotation. It may be possible to develop pulse crops on 250,000 acres. Assuming an yield of a quarter ton per acre, the additional production of pulses by crop intensification, as suggested here, would be roughly 62,500 tons per year.

2.74 Better plant protection is another measure for getting a substantial increase in yields. It is estimated that yields increase approximately by about 10 per cent through this method. The Department of Agriculture should tackle this problem more effectively. This would only be possible by strengthening the Plant Protection Wing of the Department of Agriculture.

Implements

2.75 Agricultural implements in use in the State are antiquated and inefficient. The wooden plough continues to be the master implement and is used for tillage operations of almost all the crops. Iron ploughs and other tillage implements are not popular. In fact the number of iron ploughs decreased by 22 per cent during 1951–56 and at present stands at 10,225. Tractors during the same period, however, increased from 59 to 187. Irrigation pumps too have shown an increase of 116 per cent.

2.76 The slow adoption of improved implements is mostly due to non-availability of implements and machinery suited to local conditions as well as due to their high cost. The topographical conditions and techniques of cultivation are unique in Kerala and there are no implements designed and developed to suit such conditions. There is, therefore, need for developing efficient implements for rice cultivation, plantation crops, soil conservation work and also for specialized implements such as ridgers and earthers for ginger and tapioca. It would be necessary to have a well equipped and adequately staffed agricultural engineering station to undertake the type of work suggested here. The proposed station may also do some work in designing of irrigation aids and may advise farmers on the selection of pumping sets and cane crushers.

Soil Erosion

2.77 Soil erosion is a serious problem in Kerala. Conditions prevalent in the State such as lateritic soils, undulating to steep topography, the system of farming followed and heavy cloud burst—all these constitute towards excessive soil erosion. There is no reliable estimate regarding the extent of area affected or vulnerable to soil erosion, but it is estimated that about one-third of the cultivated area—approximately 1.5 to 2 million acres—is affected by it. It should be possible to protect at least one million acres through soil conservation measures by 1971.

2.78 Soil conservation work as carried out by the Department of Agriculture has become very popular with the farmers. The Department gives technical advice on soil conservation matters and undertakes operations in specified areas in water-shed units.

796 garden fence at the seething procession in the lane below
564 must be left to the imagination. It will have been
[193] noticed that the Nambūtiris hold aloof from the festival;
they purify the temple before and after, but no more.
796 The importance attached to the various offices of those
793 who are attached to the temple by however slender
578 a thread, was illustrated by a rather amusing squabble between two of the Mukkuvans, an uncle and nephew, as to which of them should receive the silver umbrella from the temple, and bear it to the house of the goldsmith to be repaired. During the festival, one of them made a rapid journey to the Zamorin (about fifty miles distant), paid some fees, and established himself as the senior who had the right to carry the umbrella.

796 "An important local festival is that held near Palghat,
184 in November, in the little suburb Kalpāti inhabited entirely by Pattar Brāhmans from the east. But it is not a true Malayāli festival, and it suffices to mention its existence, for it in no way represents the religion of the Nāyar. The dragging of cars, on which are placed the images of deities, common everywhere from the temple of Jagganath at Pūri in Orissa to Cape Comorin, is quite unknown in Malabar, excepting only at Kalpāti, which is close to the eastern frontier of Malabar.

782 "Near Chowghāt (Chavagāt), about 30 miles to the
[131] southward of Calicut, on the backwater, at a place called
[346] Guruvayūr, is a very important temple, the property of
[635] the Zamorin, yielding a very handsome revenue. I visited
[126] the festival on one occasion, and purchase was made of
[532] a few offerings such as are made to the temple in satisfaction of vows—a very rude representation of an infant in silver, a hand, a leg, an ulcer, a pair of eyes, and, most curious of all, a silver string which represents a man, the giver. Symbolization of the offering of self is made by

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/For specific information on the political division of the Kerala state see the following:
kingdoms---635
nads (chiefdoms)---634
desams (villages)---621./